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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8473
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0294
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 9038
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 8558
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3675
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0208
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 5948
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4749
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHWSMRC/USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/FBI WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHIL/ODRP ISLAMABAD PK PRIORITY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [OVIP](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN: MANAGING VISITOR OVERLOAD

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Mission Pakistan welcomes codels and distinguished USG visitors, but the increase in the number of visitors has dangerously increased our threat profile and overtaxed our limited support resources. Effective immediately, the Mission advises Washington that we will deny country clearance for transit purposes and will limit the size and number of visiting delegations. We simply do not have the security or transportation resources to support and protect a growing number of VIP visit requests. Post recommends that the ECC process be amended to allow the bureaus/regional desks to resume their role of screening visitors. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) In August alone, Mission Pakistan received requests for over 25 high-level often overlapping visits involving over 100 travelers, some planning to come in groups of 15 or more. The Embassy and its three consulates are all critical threat posts; the level of both anti-extremist military activity in the tribal areas and militant suicide bombings across the country is increasing. Most visitors request meetings with the same GOP officials in the same venues via the same routes; this has escalated the threat/risk profile for both visitors and Mission personnel alike. Four Mission personnel were injured and were lucky to survive a suicide attack in March. Over 600 Pakistanis, mostly government and security personnel, have been killed by suicide bombings since July 2007. The latest attacks in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Karachi highlight the growing risk.

¶3. (SBU) Pakistan is not Iraq or Afghanistan. We have less than 100 U.S. military representatives in country (none of whom are dedicated to VIP protection), a limited cadre of DS agents, no U.S. military bases, and very limited air support options. These air assets (old, unarmored Huey IIs) are normally designated for use with the host government on specific anti-narcotics or counter-terrorism missions, not for VIP support. Asking the GOP to divert their own limited number of fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters (which have low readiness rates and are often not fully mission capable) from fighting militants to support VIP travel undermines our policy goals. Therefore, we cannot either support or protect large VIP contingents.

¶4. (SBU) Based on an August 8 Emergency Action Committee meeting with the Embassy and Principal Officers from Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar, the Mission advises Washington that, effective immediately:

--We will no longer grant country clearance for transit purposes only, or for overnight transit stays only. We recognize this will affect codels traveling to and from Afghanistan and Iraq, but a critical threat post should not be used as a transit point. There are ample numbers of safe, alternative destinations in the region.

--We will restrict the size of delegations to reduce our security profile in hotels, motorcades and at GOP offices. We urge that all potential delegations limit the number of principals and staff traveling to those absolutely necessary to conduct legitimate business.

--Mission Pakistan is unaccompanied for the Embassy and all constituent posts, and the environment is not safe for most potential tourism expeditions. We strongly discourage travel by spouses of congressional members, U.S. military officers or USG civilian visitors.

¶5. (SBU) We are seeing an increase in the number of USG/congressional requests to visit the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Travel in the FATA is controlled by the host government and subject to the Mission's internal threat assessments. Please be advised

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that there are ongoing military operations in this area. Based on security considerations, we restrict Mission travel to FATA and may have to deny VIP requests to visit the area. We do not have the military/security personnel or transportation assets required to provide VIPs with adequate protection. Mission is in the process of evaluating security requirements for Quetta in the face of rising numbers of requests for travel there. We will advise Department on the results of that evaluation.

¶6. (SBU) In the Mission's opinion, the new eCC process provides inadequate vetting for visitors to critical threat posts. The process should be amended to ensure the regional bureaus/desks can assist posts in screening visitors. We recommend that the previous practice of having the NSC vet visits at the Assistant Secretary and above level be re-instituted to better coordinate both visitor levels and policy implementation.

FEIERSTEIN